COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM
CONFERENCE CALL NOTES
August 8, 2001
CORPS OF ENGINEERS NORTHWESTERN DIVISION OFFICES – CUSTOM HOUSE
PORTLAND, OREGON

TMT Internet Homepage: http://www.nwd-wc.usace.army.mil/TMT/index.html

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1. Greeting and Introductions

The August 8 Technical Management Team conference call to discuss a possible increase to the 2001 summer spill program was chaired by Cindy Henriksen of the Corps and facilitated by Donna Silverberg. The following is a distillation, not a verbatim transcript, of items discussed at the meeting and actions taken. Anyone with questions or comments about these minutes should call Henriksen at 503/808-3945.

Silverberg welcomed everyone to the meeting, then led a round of introductions and a review of the agenda.

2. Discussion of Potential Spill Increase at Bonneville and The Dalles.

Henriksen said this was an emergency conference call, convened at the request of BPA, who wanted the TMT to discuss a possible expansion of the current summer spill program. BPA's Therese Lamb said her agency wanted to spend a few minutes reviewing the current status of the spill program, and to offer a proposal about how it might be expanded, in light of BPA's recent review of the 28,000 MW-month system reliability storage target and the agency's cash reserves.

Three weeks ago, said Lamb, BPA brought the TMT up to date about the current status of federal storage, together with an estimate of the impact of with low, medium and high streamflow assumptions from here through October. BPA's concern, at that point, was that if the low streamflow scenario materialized, we would miss the system reliability target by about 1,000 MW-months. Since then, said Lamb, it has become apparent that we're actually on a medium-to-high streamflow scenario; we have also been able to purchase significant amounts of power.

The upshot, said Lamb, is that we now have about 32,500 MW-months in storage, and even if steamflows are low between now and the end of September, we will still meet the storage criteria, which gives us some additional operational flexibility now, Lamb said. She added that the financial picture is less clear; there is the potential for significant cash flow problems in the

fall, or we could be fine – it depends on what prices do.

The bottom line, however, is that we have some water that we can spill now, Lamb said; we can also use some of that water to generate additional power to enhance the revenue situation, or retain it to enhance system reliability.

Specifically, BPA is proposing that spill at The Dalles go to 40% of total river flow around the clock beginning this morning, and that spill at Bonneville be increased to 50 Kcfs around the clock beginning tomorrow evening. Rudd Turner said that, after internal discussions at The Corps, Bonneville project personnel have asked that the in-water work window continue until as late as 8 p.m. tomorrow, although there would be a spill window from 6 p.m. tonight to 6 a.m. tomorrow. After tomorrow, the work will be finished, Turner said. In response to a question, Turner explained that divers are in the water below the spillway to begin measuring and installing brackets on the pier noses, in preparation for the flip-lip installation at that project. Turner added that the spill program will have to end on August 31, if the flow deflector installation is to proceed on schedule.

Bob Heinith said CRITFC believes it is important to get the Bonneville flow deflectors installed; he said it sounds as though, if the system had gone to a 24-hour spill program two weeks ago, the flip-lips would not have been installed until 2003. We're stuck with a Sophie's Choice, he said; we aren't happy about the fact that we can't go to 24-hour spill at Bonneville until those guys get out of the water. I'm not sure there is any value in rehashing what might have been, Henriksen said; the fact of the matter is, we will have 50 Kcfs spill beginning tonight at Bonneville, and will go to 50 Kcfs spill 24 hours a day starting tomorrow evening.

Henriksen said current Bonneville flow is 80 Kcfs, and noted that total river flow will have to increase somewhat in order to maintain 50 Kcfs spill. The question, she said, is what are we going to do in September? The minimum flow at Bonneville is 70 Kcfs; we're using some of our reliability reserves in August. Is that going to be a problem? Henriksen asked. BPA has some of the same concerns, Lamb said; however, our most recent analysis shows that, even with low streamflows, we should be able to meet the Bonneville minimum flow, refill Grand Coulee to elevation 1283 ft. by September 30 and keep somewhat more than 28,000 MW-months in storage by October 1. We need to continue to monitor that situation, she said, but that is our conclusion, based on our most recent analysis.

Henriksen asked which project or projects will need to be drafted to maintain the Bonneville minimum of 70 Kcfs during the month of September. Where does BPA expect Dworshak elevation, for example, to be on September 30? She asked. At either 1520 feet or 1500 feet, depending on what the TMT recommends, Lamb replied. Where do we get water to compensate for a cold snap if Dworshak is at 1500 feet? Henriksen asked. From all four headwater storage projects, Lamb replied. If we have a poor water year next year, yet again, and Dworshak is at 1500, and we use the water in storage during a cold snap, it is unlikely that we could refill that project to its flood control elevation next spring, Henriksen observed – is that a concern to NMFS? Yes, it is, Chris Ross replied; the Nez Perce Tribe and the State of Idaho, in particular, do not support drafting Dworshak to elevation 1500 this year. Those are important

issues, but I'm not sure they're affected by our decision today, Lamb said.

I disagree, said Henriksen; my concern is that if we use our system reliability storage in August, we may not be able to meet the 70 Kcfs Bonneville minimum during September, when Grand Coulee is refilling and Dworshak is passing inflow, she said. We may have different assumptions about Canadian operations, Lamb said; unless this is a show-stopping issue, I might suggest that we implement this proposed spill operation now, and revisit it at next week's TMT meeting.

What is your suggestion, Cindy, about how to move forward with this today? Silverberg asked. We need more information about the reliability issue, Henriksen replied; in particular, we need to be able to compare the Corps SSARR run and other studies with BPA's studies, before we feel comfortable implementing BPA's proposed spill operation. Once we start this operation, it will be difficult to stop, she said; purchasing does not put water back into Dworshak. It does, however, put water back into Canadian storage, which is almost as good, BPA's Steve Kearns observed.

Ross asked which is most important, in the Corps' opinion the 70 Kcfs Bonneville minimum or the 1283 refill elevation at Grand Coulee? The 70 Kcfs Bonneville minimum, from the Corps' standpoint, Henriksen replied. Reclamation would want to have some serious discussions on that point, because the 1283-foot Grand Coulee elevation is very important to us, said Tony Norris.

Shane Scott said Washington supports the increased spill program at Bonneville and The Dalles, and is appreciative of BPA's willingness to initiate both this conference call and the spill increase. Ross said NMFS also supports the increase in spill; there are still plenty of subyearling chinook coming down the system, he said. Dave Wills said the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service supports the spill increase as well. Norris said Reclamation also supports the increase, with the caveat that the storage situation be monitored carefully. Heinith said CRITFC is absolutely in support of the increased flows and spill Bonneville is proposing.

We can begin spill on 15 minutes notice at The Dalles, said Turner; we can start at 10 or 11 this morning. At Bonneville, we will plan to start spill at about 6 p.m. tonight, stop at 6 a.m. tomorrow and go to 24-hour spill starting no later than 8 p.m. tomorrow, he said. The spill volume will be 40% of total river flow at The Dalles and 50 Kcfs at Bonneville. In response to a question from Heinith, Lamb said she anticipates that total river flow at Bonneville will be in the 90 Kcfs-100 Kcfs range for the rest of this week, because of increased loads due to warmer temperatures up and down the West Coast. So as long as the weather stays warm, flows will continue to be in the 90-100 Kcfs range? Heinith asked. Yes, Lamb replied. However, this is not a sustainable operation, Henriksen said – flows in September will likely be in the mid-70 Kcfs range. Heinith noted that CRITFC will be submitting an SOR very soon covering Lower Columbia pool elevations during the fall fishery. Thanks for the heads-up, Henriksen said.

It sounds, then, as though we have agreement that the spill increase at Bonneville and The Dalles go forward as proposed, with the caveat that we will be continually monitoring the

system reliability and storage situation, Silverberg said. Cathy Hlebechuk noted that it may also be necessary to curtail spill for a few hours at Bonneville if TDG levels at Camas/Washougal exceed 115%. Heinith asked why the Corps wouldn't just reduce the spill volume, rather than curtailing spill altogether; Turner observed that this discussion has already taken place at TMT, and the Corps is uncomfortable reducing the spill volume much below 45 Kcfs due to the detrimental effects of the lower spill volume on fish egress conditions in the Bonneville tailrace.

Turner said the Corps will implement the increased spill program as recommended by the TMT; however, the Corps has serious concerns about the sustainability of this operation in light of the need to meet the 70 Kcfs minimum flow at Bonneville, the 1283-foot elevation target at Grand Coulee and the 28,000 MW-month system reliability storage target during the month of September. Given the fact that we're currently running water out of storage at a rate of 90 Kcfs-100 Kcfs, Turner said, the Corps is concerned that, in spite of BPA's analysis, current flows vs. needed storage levels just don't fit here. We will continue to monitor the system reliability situation closely, and will discuss it again at the August 15 TMT meeting, Silverberg said. In response to a question, Lamb said the spill program will continue through August 31, unless compelling financial or system reliability concerns arise in the interim.

Hlebechuk informed the TMT that the Corps needs to switch the large unit at Dworshak to undershot mode, in order to draw colder water from deeper in the reservoir. Making the switch will require a short-duration shut-down of the large unit, during which period total Dworshak discharge will be decreased to about 4.5 Kcfs for a few hours. No TMT objections were raised to this change.

With that, the conference call was adjourned. The next TMT meeting was scheduled for 9 a.m.-noon on Wednesday, August 15. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA Writer-Editor pool.

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